The Groundnut, Arachis hypogaea L.

(Plate 6)

●244 The groundnut (owŭnŏ, derived from the stem a wŭno = to set, to plant) occupies the third – with the Jaunde the second – rank in the order of the most important food plants. In the Fang region five different varieties are distinguished, of which one, mŏne owŭnŏ, has again been given up because of its small fruit. Of the remaining four, the following are found together in one and the same field with equal frequency: the upright, more hairy asŏ'mena, which according to Sadebeck (1) is Arachis

[113]

1. R. Sadebeck, Die Kulturgewächse der deutschen Kolonien und ihre Erzeugnisse /The Cultivated Plants of the German Colonies and their Products/ (Jena, 1899), p. 230.

asiatica Lour. (it is illustrated by Plate 6), and the low-growing Arachis africana Lour. or var. glabrata D.C. (ebăn, Ntum; ekă'b or engŭs, Fang. The variety eyŏ'lo (Fang) or evüŏ'le (Ntum), distinguished by fruit that is thicker and not quite so long, and the variety ezō'na are likewise sometimes found in the same field.

244 311 Anyone who travels in the land of the Pangwe will immediately recognize how important a role the groundnut has in the agricultural economy of the natives. The only farms that may delight the eye of a European are the groundnut farms. Walking through the cassava and sugar cane plantations, one is afforded no unobstructed over-all view of them, and on the ngon farms one constantly has to climb over tree trunks that have been left lying around. After passing through these or even through a stretch of dense forest or bush and then coming upon a groundnut plantation, one draws a breath of relief. The wanderer will see the plantation lying before him, framed by the darkness of the forest interspersed with the brighter green of the young maize which is usually planted, along with the groundnut, as a border

244 against the forest and in the middle along the boundaries of the
311 individual plots (Plate 7). The groundnut plantation with its cleanness and unobstructed view will vividly remind the visitor of European vegetable fields; one groundnut plant next to the other shoots forth its many quadripartite leaves, irrigated by the ample moisture of the tropical rain, and here and there one can see the yellow blossoms shining through the leaves.

244 The planting and harvesting seasons of the groundnut are as follows.

First sowing: planted in September and the beginning of October; harvested towards the end of December.

Second sowing: planted in March and April; harvested in July and August.

The groundnut is thus planted before the rainy season and harvested during the following dry seasons.

244 The clearing and burning of farms, accordingly, is under-
476 taken jointly by the men of the village in February, March, and again in July and August. /90/ The field is divided among the men, and they proceed to clear the larger tree trunks and branches out of the way, while the women clean up the farm and then place in the ground the seeds or the nuts which have already sprouted. They do this by digging a small hole with a hoe, throwing the seeds or, as the case may be, the nuts into it, and then pressing the soil down with their feet. The harvest begins when the leaves, with the exception of the topmost ones, are fairly well dried. The soil is loosened, and the women pick out the nuts and put them in plate-shaped baskets (dzǎd).

244 Three years must elapse before groundnuts can again be grown in the same soil. The women have also noticed that the groundnut – which requires a certain amount of calcium in the soil – does not thrive everywhere, and hence they are in the habit of saying: "Let us not plant groundnuts again in this vicinity, for they do not thrive here." Like the majority of cultivated plants in the tropics, groundnuts draw practically no pests. They are harmed most of all by the following animals which eat their leaves: by the guib, Tragelaphus knutsoni Lemberg (nkǒk); and the dwarf goat, Neotragus batesi Winton (odzǒǒ). Furthermore,

244 there is the striped mouse, Mus pulchellus Gray (zǒfó III), which gnaws the nuts. A kind of black rot affects the nuts here and there during certain years. A number of caterpillar species which consume the leaves can scarcely be designated as actual pests. It
244 is probable that the black rot has led the women to the belief that
789 other women are capable of making their groundnuts sick and of ruining them by means of "medicine." They try to counter this trick with a medicine consisting of the bones of the turtle, the elephant, the pig, and the guib, which are burned to ashes and then crushed; it is scattered on the seeds before planting. Of the remaining medicines that are supposed to influence favorably the growth of groundnuts, the most important one consists of rubbing
[386 the groundnuts with a specially prepared coloring made from red
824] wood, ba-ayǎ′; accordingly, this medicine is called ba-ayǎ′. This red coloring (see Section 18, "Sexual Life") produces the
[822] desired results and fends off hostile intentions. Red is everywhere the color of joy, growth, and reproduction. On the day the woman plants the groundnuts, she paints a line between her index finger and thumb with the "medicinal red" which will give her a lucky hand; or she draws a similar line on the upper surface of a tree stump and covers the stump with leaves, like a cap. This is to say: "May you groundnuts blossom, grow, and thrive (the red color is for this) under such a protection (referring to the leaves); nobody will be able to do you any harm (referring to the
[833] medicine)." Furthermore, on the eve of sowing, the man usually sets a good example for the groundnuts "assembled" in the *basket /91/ by performing coitus for their benefit. With this* example he sends them on their way: "Multiply! (1)" Another

[841
834]

1. This is done even when the woman is menstruating, whereas sexual intercourse is otherwise avoided during this period. In this case, as a medicinal act, sexual intercourse with a menstruating woman is supposed to be particularly good for the groundnuts, on condition that the woman "brings good luck (aylie)" (see Section 18, "Sexual Life").

Another
244 fertility medicine consists of the following mixture: 1) bark
789 of the Simarubacea Irvingia barteri Hook. f. (andŏ̀k; 2) bark
[824] bark of the Anacardiacea Pseudospondias microcarpa (Rich.) Engl. (ofŏ̀s); 3) elephant manure; 4) sand from the Campo or the Uelle; 5) salt. On the eve of sowing this mixture is added to the nuts. This, too, must be understood as a direct transfer of power: the groundnuts are to be as numerous as the fruits of the two plants named; they are to become as enormous as the pile of elephant manure; as numerous as sand in the Campo — we would say, as the sands of the ocean; and as innumerable as the grains
[824] of salt. Finally, certain Liliaceae (ayán) are planted between the groundnuts so that their leaves may become as green as the lilies in the field. As can be seen, there is no lack of friendly encouragement and good examples.

244 The fruit, illustrated in cross-section by Plate 6, Drawings a and b, usually has two seeds, more rarely three, and still more rarely one. Something reminiscent of our love feast occurs when a boy at work finds a fruit with three seeds in his mother's
[195] basket or in the field, calls his friends, and shares the seeds with them. This is called euphemistically: bi kī kăbăd, "we dissect a goat." Thus, we have here the doctrine: Do not forget to do good and to share with your fellow man when you are living in abundance! It is probably more by way of a game that the Pangwe, especially the children, sometimes eat the nuts raw. Otherwise
[553] raw nuts are prepared principally for soup or compote. It is also customary to boil the whole fruit and then eat the seeds. The
[567] *nuts are stored in large, tall baskets of raffia pith, which are hung* under the roof or placed on a bed, or the nuts may be placed loose on the groundnut loft, akăn owŭnŏ.

433 As a result of their laziness and indifference, the Pangwe
435 seldom have enough groundnuts, so there is always a period of
244 time when they have to do without them until the next harvest has been brought in and is sufficiently dried. This is the reason that in the Ntum and Fang regions at these times the price for a "plate" (2)

[804] 2. The flat plate-shaped baskets called bush plates are a unit of measurement.

244

Fig. 52. Plantation of Groundnuts and Maize near Bébai (Esseng Family), Southern Cameroons.

433 of groundnuts rises to ten spears (equal to 70 pfennigs) while at
435 other times only five spears (equal to 35 pfennigs) are given for
244 it. In the Jaunde region, it is true, a plate always costs 70 pfennigs (equal to 100 Jaunde spears). The groundnut is eaten simply as soup or compote. /92/ /Fig. 52 appears here in the original text./ The oil content of the nuts is not utilized to
302 any great extent, but the oil released by cooking is rubbed on the skin in order not to waste it. Finally we might mention the
524 riddle:

onṓn	o	nga	bḗ	a fā́	e
(A) bird,	it	lives	give birth to	behind the house	of the

bonǐ́ɛ̄:	akī́	avōk	a	kŏke	bŏn	avūm
mothers:	egg	one;	there	creep out	young ones	ten.

Answer: owŭno = groundnut.

243 Maize, Zea mays L. (fū́n IV), as we have said, is almost always grown with the groundnut (Fig. 52), usually as a means of marking off the individual plots and as a border against the bush all around the plantation. Farms that grow maize

243 exclusively are comparatively rare. Just like the groundnut, maize is planted in the beginning of October and matures in December. Then it is again planted in March and matures between the middle of May and July. Guess a riddle! = kándáñ.

524 I guess = kandáñ.

ma yěn bonĕnga, bŏ mbe ekŏ-ne, bŏnĕnga bete:
I see women, they were on a journey, women meant:

mabum a mabum
bellies – bellies.

I see women who came on a journey (that is, who formerly were not here), and they are all pregnant (the ears in the husks).

Answer: fú'n = maize. /93/

244 The Ngon, Cucumeropsis edulis Cogn. (ngŏn IV, Jaunde; ngôn IV Fang)

(Plate 8)

The ngon is one of the cucurbitaceous plants and has pentagonal leaves (more rarely the leaves have five lobules) with finely serrated edges. The leaves are attached to the nearly round stalk at intervals where, in addition to an occasional offshoot, usually another shoot, one or two male panicles, and occasionally a single female blossom are found. A piece of such a stalk is illustrated by Plate 8. The blossoms, jokingly called atsí'ne kŭ, "turtle's feet," by the Fang, are not very large and have lemon yellow petals which are turned back. The female blossoms (d and e) are somewhat variable in size and bear a hypogenous ovary; their margin and pistil are green. As for the male blossoms (b-c), on the other hand, the stamens are yellow on top. The fruit is large, longish, and egg-shaped.

In the Fang region three varieties of ngon are distinguished. These varieties are recognizable, however, only by their fruits

244 (Drawings f-h). The variety osă'bŏme (f) has the largest fruit; it is about 15 centimeters long, a bright yellowish-green with vague, speckled markings, and slightly narrowed toward the middle. In the case of the second variety (g), nia ngŏn (the real ngon) or nsūsūte (the dark ngon), the fruit, in contrast to that of the first kind, is usually oviform, twelve centimeters long, and dark green with streaks or strips of a light green color; sometimes the fruit is spotted. This variety appears to be the most common. Finally, mŏne ngŏn, the small ngon (h), is considerably smaller, measuring only nine to ten centimeters, rarely more, and it is brighter. Here the speckled marking, which we have already observed in osă'bŏme, is so blurred that one can speak of bright green specks on a somewhat darker background. As regards the seeds, I counted 190-200 in the case of osă'bŏme, 224 in the case of nsūsūte, and only 80 in the case of mŏne ngŏn. The seeds are pear-shaped (e) and white, and only the inside is eaten. Frequent crossings appear among the fruit although on one and the same plant fruit of the same variety is usually found, and hence it is possible to speak of genuine species, just as in the case of apples and pears.

244 262 Among the seven chief food plants, ngon occupies fourth place. Only among the Jaunde does it take fifth place, while maize has moved to fourth. I cannot determine whether it was only the drier climate of Jaunde country that caused maize which thrives in a dry climate to be preferred to ngon which grows more successfully in the rainy southern and western Pangwe region. In any case, ngon is of such importance for the huge Pangwe region and far beyond it that one would think considerable space would be devoted to it in technical books about tropical cultivated plants /94/. As it happens, however, the plant is not mentioned by Sadebeck, Fesca, or anywhere else.

244 TD Concerning the origin of the name, the Fang tell the following little story. At first the name ngŏn was quite unknown; the plant was simply called by the general name ekŭluga (from a kūt, "to crack," because the seeds are opened by being cracked, and this is a general expression for all fruits that are opened by cracking and have an edible interior, for instance, andŏk = Irvingia, etc.). Furthermore, ngon was not yet cultivated as it

244 is today; instead, women gathered its fruit in the bush. Once
773 upon a time, there was a man who had no sister he could sell to obtain a wife for himself, nor did he have any other person who could help him to get married. He hit upon the idea of starting a huge ngon farm, and when the ngon was ripe many people came and bought the kernels. In this way he finally earned so much money that he had the purchase price for a girl. When other people, who likewise had no wives, heard about this, they began to imitate him and also married through the aid of the plant. Hence, it is said: "Oh, I see this plant like a girl (ngṓn), and therefore it shall be called ngō̂n also, for if the man had had no ngon (ngō̌n), he would not have been able to marry a girl
[194] (ngō'n)." It should be noted that the two words differ in pitch; the word for the plant has falling pitch in Fang (ngō̂n), rising pitch in Jaunde (ngō̌n), whereas the word for girl has only high pitch (ngō'n). A narrative in the creation story is very similar.

244 Ngon is planted only once a year since its cultivation requires the period from April to December. In April, frequently long before, the bush is cut and burned. The ground, however, is not cleared, and everything is left lying just as it fell; at most the largest brushwood is removed from the connecting paths. Walking through a farm, especially along the plantation paths, is therefore quite a gymnastic feat. A ngon farm is often cleared
[476 communally by the inhabitants of two neighboring villages who
602] belong to the same kin group. To the uninitiated, however, the boundaries are not discernible. They are indicated by trees that have been left standing or have fallen over and more rarely by lianas tied to the branches of tree trunks lying on the ground. It is astonishing that no boundary disputes arise.

244 In April, once the farm area has been burned over, the
462 women go into the fields, and with their universal tool, the hoe, they plant the ngon seeds in the ground. The seeds must first have been soaked in water for a day, and two or three of them are planted in the same hole. Because of the tree trunks and the brush lying about, planting is hard work, and for this reason the men usually assist at the task, at least on the first day, equipped with /95/ /Fig. 53 appears here in the original text/ hoes and digging

244
252
301

Fig. 53. Woman from Bébai (Esseng Family) Cracking Ngon in a Cassava Field.

244 [462] sticks. During the planting of groundnuts, on the other hand, "no handsome young man, in fact, no one who by virtue of strength, beauty, and influence is of any account," helps; the only assistance given is provided now and then by a man, ugly or old, who wants to make himself popular with his wife, "so she will not eventually run away and live with somebody else." Once planting is finished, ngon is left to itself and proceeds to climb up the tree trunks and branches. *By the middle of May it is already* knee high. In June or July the field is weeded once, and later the ngon itself, rising above all else, chokes out the weeds; only some of the larger plants shoot up in spite of it and are occasionally pulled out. In September we already find some of the fruit fully ripened, and at the start of the dry season, in November and December, harvesting can be started. By that time, the leaves and stalks are almost completely dry, and the fruit hangs from the dry stalks in the branches of the trees which served the plant as a prop and are now leafless.

At harvest time an area in the plantation is cleared and carefully covered with leaves. Then the fruit is picked -- a job

which is completed in three days in the case of medium-sized plantations -- and heaped up in this area around which a fence of oil palm leaves has been constructed. The fruit is beaten with a stick to open it (Fig. 53), the contents are left in, and for /98/ protection against field mice and rain, it is covered with cardamom leaves. This job is completed in one day. Then the fruit must lie for four days. After this period the seeds are taken out of the fruit, placed in ordinary baskets lined with banana leaves, and left standing in the house for a day. Then they are washed in a river in order to remove the fruit slime clinging to them which has begun to ferment. This somewhat complicated preparation is concluded by the drying process. To this end the seeds, with loam added, are thoroughly kneaded by hand and then spread out in the village square. The reason for kneading them in loam is not clear. Some say -- and this seems to be the most probable explanation -- that the ngon becomes "stronger" by this process, since of course the dark color of the loam causes the sun to have a stronger effect on the seed. Others, especially Jaunde women, give the explanation that otherwise, that is, if the seeds were not mixed with loam, coma or dizziness comes through the eyes when the seeds are cracked open. I am unable to determine whether this is merely a superstition or is based on correct observation. At any rate, the seeds must dry in the sun on the village square for two days or, when bad weather intervenes, for a correspondingly longer period of time. A traveler walking through the villages after the ngon harvest will find quantities of white seeds covered with loam spread out in front of many houses. Children and women guard the treasure from meddlesome dogs and hens and make indignant threats at any trespasser on their harvest. Especially energetic women bombard the intruding animals with stones, small pieces of wood, or other missiles, until finally the anxious husband emerges from the meeting house and by means of a stick or a fly swatter drives away the disturbers of the peace to a respectful distance, where they come to the realization that there are other and better places and pounce upon the nearest, less carefully guarded pile. In my travels I have always enjoyed this time of year especially, since at these times there was at least some life in the village square which is otherwise so quiet. Furthermore, when a black rain cloud indicates the approach of a tornado, the whole community comes to life.

252 Everybody rushes to gather up the seeds; even hobbling old men and little naked children eagerly take part. Great care is taken, however, to get none of the dust which covers the village square in great quantities, no matter how much sweeping is done. Ordinarily, however, the seeds are gathered very quietly and slowly in the late afternoon, all the more slowly since the loam of which I have already spoken is carefully removed from the seeds. The fear of surprise downpours, incidentally, has produced all kinds of preventive medicines which I shall describe in another place (Section 14). /97/

244 136 Ngon suffer from pests more than the groundnut. Among these are beetles and caterpillars, but above all a species of bug which feeds on the leaves and a number of mammals which feed on the fruit. Among these mammals should be mentioned especially the red-tailed monkey, Cercopithecus buccalis Leconte (ǒkǒ́k), and, wherever it occurs, the baboon, Maimon planirostris Elliot (esǐ́ge); furthermore, from the family of squirrels there are Sciurus eborivorus Du Chaillu (mvǒ̃k) and Sciurus lemniscatus Leconte (osǒ̃n); among the mice, the worst pest is Dendromys messorius Thomas (njaa); and there are also other species, such as Mus pusillulus Ptrs. (okǒ̃b). In places elephants and buffaloes, which likewise eat the fruit, create a great deal of destruction. The guib (nkǒ́k) eats the leaves. Fruit

244 789 rot (ntūī́ ngǒ̃n, that is "diarrhea of the ngon"), the result of an overabundant rainfall, likewise reduces the harvest, at times to a considerable extent. Against all these enemies there is not much to be done since they do not pay much attention to preventive medicines; nonetheless, Pangwe women believe that they can influence the seeds and the young plants by all kinds of means, as in the case of the groundnut. One such means, ba-aya, has already been described in connection with the groundnut. A second method consists of sprinkling the seeds themselves in the bush plate where they are kept for sowing with red wood that has been ground to a powder (red wood as a symbol of growth, joy, and reproduction). Another pro-

244 789 824 cedure to encourage the growth of the ngon plants and to make them produce an abundance of fruit is called emǐ̌ ndǒ̃b, that is, squirting of (the medicine in the) banana leaf vessel. For this purpose a vessel made of banana leaves is buried in the middle of the farm or set up there, and the following things are put into it.

1. Fruit of Alchornea cordifolia Muell. Arg. (abuĭ), because of the quantity of its fruit; hence also its name abuĭ from abuĭ, "much" (compare a bue, "break into pieces," for then there are many pieces!).

2. Herb of the Amaranthaceae Aerua lanata (L.) Juss. (angō'nengō'ne III, angō'ngō'ne = assimilated, angō'ngōno), because of its abundant inflorescence.

3. Fruit of the Pseudospondias microcarpa (Rich.) Engl. (ofō'o), because of its many fruits (cf. groundnut medicines).

4. Fruit of the Euphorbiacea Staphysora duseni Pax. (owŭwŭmu II and III), because of its many flowers; hence the name is derived from a wŭmu, "to put forth," the name being formed by reduplication.

5. Pulverized leaves of the melegueta pepper, Aframomum melegueta K. Schum. (andŭn), likewise because of the luxuriant growth of the plant. /98/

All these items are stirred together in water inside the vessel and are then squirted onto the young ngon plants by means of a piece of stalk of the Cissus (pfăzŏk IV), so that the ngon may "grow as luxuriantly as the Cissus shoot."

Depending upon the region, the various elements and admixtures of the medicine differ; frequently some of them are used by themselves. For instance, Staphysora mixed with charcoal is scattered on the plants. All the components of the medicine listed above, however, are chosen because they can transfer their power to the ngon plants.

The economic importance of ngon is indicated by the fact that among the Ntum and Fang the women who planted the ngon are forbidden to have sexual intercourse for three months. The significance of this disproportionately long period of fast, if I may call it such, may be measured by the fact that in the important women's cult Mekang, for instance, the initiates are forced to practice only ten days' sexual abstinence, and in the most important men's cult, the

244 Sso of the Jaunde, sexual abstinence effectively lasts only three
134 months. The Fang say that the ngon would not grow if the prohibition were broken, and since with them the belly counts for more than love, this prohibition is generally observed.

Only the softer interior of the ngon kernel can be eaten. The
244 kernels must therefore be cracked open, and this is done by means
253 of a little stick from the tree Microdesmis puberula Hook. f.,
134] Euphorbiaceae (obĭmyŏ̄n), with which they lightly strike the seed after placing it on end. Old and young, men and women, participate in this task which is carried out inside and in front of the dwelling house, as well as in the meeting house. It is an activity characterised by a peculiar clicking noise not easily forgotten once one has heard it. In spite of its importance in the household, the ngon is not prepared in a great variety of ways; like the groundnut, it is eaten only in the form of a soup or it is pulverized and boiled in a leaf bundle.

524 In conclusion, patient reader, kĭ́ndắn (guess a riddle!); kĭ́ndắn (I guess):

akŏ̄n	afṓ,	e	mane	nkū́na	ngūī,
spear	one,	he	makes ready	herd-swine.	

Answer:

okŏ̄k	ofṓ,	e	mane	dĭ̄ad	e	ngŏ̄n
beater	one,	he	makes ready	bush plate	(with)	ngon.

244 Yams, as a secondary crop with ngon, are of two principal kinds: the three-leaved yams, Dioscorea dumetorum (Kunth) Pax (andĕ̄ă); and the common yams, Dioscorea minutiflora Engl. (emvūī). /99/ Each has four species. In addition, the Pangwe differentiate two more kinds which, however, perhaps belong to Dioscorea minutiflora or are close to it: ăŋō̄ III Ntum, dăŋ̆ (plural, bĭŋ́) Fang; and ebṓŋō̄. In the Jaunde region there is furthermore the Jaunde yam with large tubers, ekṓda Jaunde. Finally, the air tuber yam, Dioscorea sativa L. (alĕ̄k), is also cultivated, but only in very small quantities. As we said above, the conditions for the growth of the yam resemble those of the ngon; it also climbs up the brush and trees left lying about,

244 and for that reason yams, especially the air tuber yam, are frequently planted with ngon. In general, the only edible part of the yam is the rhizome, and in the case of the air tuber yams, only the air tubers which all fall off at the same time when they are ripe. This has given rise to a symbolic custom practiced when the children eat yams. For instance, when the three sons of one mother eat yams, the first nudges the second, and the latter nudges the third, as a sign that they wish to die after one another, as is natural, and not all on the same day, like the air tubers.

Considerably less can be said of the third group than of the first and second groups. The chief plant belonging to it is cassava or manioc, Manihot utilissima Pohl (mbùn I). The times for /Fig. 54 appears here in the original text/ the cultivation of cassava are as follows:

Fig. 54. Cassava Shoot.

vúgn esèb - long dry season (December to February), felling the trees on the farm;

ló gō esèb - short rainy season (March to May), planting the shoots;

ọ̀ǹn - the rainy half of the year.

In the following esèb, in other words, from January of the following year on, that is, seven months after transplanting, harvesting may begin, and it may extend over an arbitrary period of time since the plant is a perennial.

There are no medicines for the growth of cassava as there are for the groundnut and ngon. The prayer of the Pangwe -- an ancient one in new guise -- would be: "Dear God, let the groundnut and ngon flourish, cassava grows by itself!" Cassava has comparatively few enemies; only goats and sheep like to eat the leaves. There is a species of grasshopper (mbàmàn III) which descends in

•244 great numbers on the leaves of all cultivated plants, especially cassava and sugar cane. There are seven varieties of cassava, but it would take us too far afield to enumerate them here. As Figure 54 indicates, cassava is planted by heaping a little soil over the shoot. /100/

249 Similarly, sugar cane, Saccharum officinarum L. (nkɔ̌́k I), is "planted" during the rainy season. Its shoots are taken from the upper part of the stalk, called the "arrow" (Fangwe: esɔ̌́k), but it requires a longer period of time to ripen for it is not harvested until after the second subsequent rainy season, in other words, after thirteen months. Cassava and sugar cane are frequently found together in a planted area, often with cultivated plantains also interspersed among them.

Riddles

524

1. olɔ̌́e e ne m' oko, ke a wɔ̀ɔ̀́
(A) water, it is to me there, not (to) flow.
--The sap in the sugar cane.

2. bangɛ́-tiida (1) be ne m' oko, vɔ̌ medíʃke
wives-father's they are to me there, merely (with) dancing caps,

1. Archaic form; nowadays the usual form is boyɛ́.

medíʃk
dancing caps.
--maíʃn me nkɔ̌́k = blossoms of the sugar cane.

3. ma vɔ̀ɔ̀n okɔ̌́-a ngɔ̌́k, o ke ʃʃme
I throw-to a little more from the rubble, it goes hissing
nga nɔ̀ɔ́-kɔ̀ɔ́ɔ́ alɔ́ɔ́
woman, Nɔ̀ɔ́ngkodo, (at the) knee.

The solution to this last riddle will be apparent from the following drawing (Fig. 55). Nɔ̀ɔ́ngkodo is a jocular name for sugar cane and alludes to the curvature of its stem; nɔ̀ɔ́ɔ́, nɔ̀ɔ́ɔ́ originally meant

524 "star," "sun," and was later carried over for people and used as a /Fig. 55 appears here in the original text/ personal name, and kɛ́t - bent; we would perhaps say: "Your Excellency Von Bent."

•244 I now turn to the second part of the cultivated plants, those that are cultivated in gardens, that is, in small operations and for the most part behind or close to the dwelling. To be sure, the difference between field and garden cultivation is not everywhere sharply defined. For instance, the garden plant taro is often planted at a distance from the village in fields, and plantains are frequently grown on cassava farms and other farms.

Taro, Colocasia antiquorum Schott (atú), and Macabo, Xanthosoma violaceum Schott (ekábe)

The taro or Colocasia is -- as the Latin name indicates -- a cultivated plant of some antiquity even for the Pangwe; hence they have no ready explanation for the name atú. The macabo, [111] on the other hand, which stems from /101/ America, has only recently been introduced and, according to the natives, was

[244]

Fig. 55. Sugar Cane Shoot.

taken over by the coastal peoples about thirty years ago (1):

[305] 1. As soon as one has become familiar with the Negroes' ability to estimate time, one becomes very cautious with respect to the preciseness of historical dates.

hence its name ekábe from a kɛ́b-an, "to hand over, to divide, to take possession of." Both plants belong to the Araceae family. Taro is distinguished from macabo by the fact that its leaves are

244 only slightly indented near the bottom and the stalk of the leaf is articulated down by the flat part, while the macabo has true arrow-shaped leaves so that the indentation extends down to the stalk. Furthermore, macabo leaves have a slight sheen on the surface, while taro leaves are dull and their veins have an almost bluish tinge. Taro has yellow blossoms; macabo has white, green, and rose tinted ones; both blossom in the rainy seasons.

Strangely enough, Europeans in the Cameroons tend to prefer macabo to taro; the former is their substitute for the potato in Africa, although the latter, if merely steamed, doubtless has the better taste. At the same time the Pangwe have little love for macabo and have retained taro, their traditional cultivated plant. The explanation for this may be the fact that the Europeans first employed cooks from among the Batanga /Tanga/, one of the coastal peoples. Macabo is more important to them than taro, and their word akabe (plural, makabe) became macabo among the Europeans. Generally speaking, there is little to say about macabo cultivation among the Pangwe. They simply let it grow in the old places between the plantains around the village, just as it was left by departing predecessors. There it stands today -- reverting to the wild state -- and anyone can take as much as he likes. When the Pangwe settle a new region, however, they too plant macabo in the village and occasionally cultivate it. Two species of macabo are distinguished: the green mfú'm ekábe (mfú'm, "white, bright"), whose tubers are white; and a second, nfúl ekábe (nfúl, "dark"), whose leafstalks are a dark reddish color and whose tubers are likewise reddish. The white species is indisputably the better one. The dark species is not suited for the preparation of the macabo biscuits that are popular among the Europeans.

Taro, on the other hand, is cultivated, and since, as is well known, it thrives on moist soil, it is planted in the vicinity of swamps or in places with an abundance of water, more rarely near houses, and usually together with macabo. Taro farms are generally not large. There are three species of taro:

1. mfú'm atú: leafstalks green, underside of the leaf smooth;
2. atáfle III (from a dźá, "to fill"; this species bears so many little tubers that they fill a whole plate): leafstalks bluish, underside of the leaf smooth; /102/

244 3. undlĭndŏle III: leafstalks bluish, underside of leaf along each side of the ribs has dark green lichenous excrescences.

Taro is planted twice, in the long and short rainy seasons, and it is harvested twice, in the following long and short dry seasons. All the tubers are removed from the soil, and the farm is thus harvested completely. If any tubers are forgotten, they are picked up during the next dry season, but that is the end; there are never more than two harvests from the same sowing. A piece of land once used for taro is never cultivated a second time since enough swampy soil is available. There are no medicines to promote the growth of taro.

709

The tubers and young leaves are eaten as vegetables. Furthermore, the Pangwe are familiar with the fact that insufficiently boiled tubers cause "metŕ́ĥ," that is, itching in the neck, and so forth. The tubers are also used as medicine for blood tumors (mvi᷄m); the resin-like secretion of the Pachylobus fraxinifolius Engl., Burseraceae (asĕ᷄), is placed on the swelling, and over this is smeared a salve made from the parings of raw taro tubers. This is supposed to make the diseased areas become "ntégan," that is, weak or soft.

757 278

Plantain

245 The shoots of the plantain, as well as of the banana which is cultivated alongside it, are planted around the village or on farms. They thrive without care and ripen during each season of the year. The plantain (1) or Negro banana, Musa paradisiaca L. (ekō᷄n).

1. The /German/ word Plante is derived from "plantain" which in turn comes from the Spanish plátano, "banana." Since the plantain is very different from the true banana, I consider the retention of the word "plantain" useful. The French call it banane-cochon.

Figure 86, which in the Pangwe region has 25 different varieties, does not, to be sure, attain the luxuriance of the banana which grows like a weed. Nevertheless, it is very productive, just the plant for a Negro.

mentăngan, "bananas of the Whites." Later it was given the name etăt, from the stem a tăt, "to moan." "One" ate too much of it; "one" could not digest so much; "one" became weak; "one" could not catch anything during the hunt, which among the Pangwe is always the chief source of worry, and so forth.

I can only give a brief account at this point of the less important vegetables. The sweet potato, Ipomoea batatas L. (dŭgŭ III), is not cultivated; it thrives like a weed in the vicinity of the villages and chokes out every other weed, so that one can speak of miniature potato fields. It is not a very popular food. Other vegetables are sown and planted either in the vicinity of the houses or on the farms. Of these vegetables we should name first Cucurbita maxima Duch. (abŏ́k), which belongs to the Cucurbitaceae family and of which there are four varieties. The flesh of the fruit is eaten, as is the interior of the seeds, and small unripe fruit is also added whole to the groundnut bundle. Its young leaves are cut into small pieces and eaten as vegetables. The skin of the fruit cannot be removed, otherwise one would be wounded in battle. The men must avoid the seeds if they do not want to lose their virility the /104/ following night; hence it is regarded as tactless if the women serve the fruit with the seeds to the men at mealtime.

Of the Malvaceae and the Tiliaceae, Hibiscus and Corchorus (tĕ́gĕ́ III - fruit, etĕ́'tăm) are planted. The name is derived from a tĕ́k, "weak," for the leaves are cooked in a short time on the fire; the fruit is called etĕ́'tam from a tĕbé etăm, "to stand alone," for they stand alone at the tip of the stalk when the leaves are withered or have been picked off. Both fruit and leaves are eaten. The following varieties are distinguished: Hibiscus moschatus Roxb. (nis tĕ́gĕ - true hibiscus); and the Tiliaceae Corchorus olitorius L. (ngŏ̀bekŏ́mo IV). The name esăn includes three plants of different families, namely, Hibiscus sabdariffa L. (engắne-esăn), the Polygonacea Rumex abessynicus Jacq. (ebĕ́bŭ́ŏ́-es), and the Melastomataceae Dinoris decumbens (P.B.) Trian. (esĭsắ-bongŏ́n-h'uyek).

All these plants are sown, and their leaves are eaten.
Other cultivated plants are the following.

244 From the family of the Solanaceae there are: Solanum melongena L. var. inerme Hiern. (aʒǒ́n); Solanum dinklagei U.D. (oyʊ́la); Solanum lycopersicum L. (aʒʊ́ɔ́ ntʌ́ŋgan = aʒǒ́n, that is, Solanum melongena, of the Whites). The fruit of these three varieties of Solanum is eaten. Furthermore, there is Solanum aethiopicum L. (ʒʊ́m IV, enɛ̌m) with three varieties: nɨ́ ʒʊ́m = true ʒʊ́m, ntʊ́ma I, and ndzɔ̌ɔ́' -ʒʊ́m, as well as Solanum macrocarpum L. var. thonningii (etʊ́ɔ́' -ʒʊ́m from etʊ́ɔ́' = Solanum duplosinuatum U.D., because of the similarity of the fruit). The leaves of the latter two species are eaten. From the family of the Amaranthaceae there are: Celosia argentea L. (ʒʊ́m e mvɛ́lɛ́, that is, ʒʊ́m of the Mwele); Celosia laxa Schum. et Thom. (fʊ́lʊ́m [?], ebʊ́nɛ́gɔ́n); Amaranthus paniculatus L. (fʊ́lʊ́m IV, fom IV). From the family of the Labiatae there are: Ocimum basilicum L. (osi m); Ocimum gratissimum L. (asɔ́ŋ); Plectranthus spec. (avɔ́), afɔ́n; and Aeolanthus edlingeri Gürke (elɛ́lɔ́nge, Ntum; elɔ́ŋgelɔ́nge, Fang).

II. Livestock

231 For reasons which I shall mention in a moment, the Pangwe keep domestic animals, but this is not the kind of economic activity that could be called stock farming. The four-footed domestic animals include dogs, goats, and sheep; as for fowl, there are hens and, recently introduced, ducks.

[262] The dog (mʊ̀ IV) is kept basically for hunting. It is also eaten, a practice which is especially popular among the Jaunde. In the eyes /105/ of the European this dog is no more than a caricature, a repulsive travesty of a real dog. A glance into their false eyes suffices to make one hate the animals. Usually they are covered with sores; they are thieving and treacherous, disobedient, cowardly, and at the same time quarrelsome. In these characteristics they frequently strike the observer as comparable to their masters. I was struck by their not very highly developed sexual urge, in contrast to European dogs. The Pangwe values his dog all the more highly because of its great usefulness on the hunting drive. Good hunting dogs are very difficult to obtain from their owners and are worth as much

231 435

1: Tessmann--332 E-5 (1904-1909) 1913 FH9 Fang FH9

244

Groundnut Plantation with Maize in the background, Ntum Region.